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W. Price

A

BRIEF ACCOUNT

OF

THE LIFE AND POLITICAL OPINIONS

OF

MARTIN VAN BUREN,

PRESIDENT OF THE U. STATES:

FROM

THE MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

MAY, 1840.



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MARTIN VAN BUREN.

It is now fully apparent that the plan of operations, adopted for the ensuing political campaign, by the faction of Mr. Van Buren, in the hope of preventing the election of Gen'l. Harrison, and thereby of perpetuating their own power, is that of systematic ridicule, calumny and abuse, of one of the brightest and purest names, yet given to the history of our country. A Baltimore Journal proposes to give him a barrel of hard cider and a pension, and then let him be content to pass the remainder of his days in a Log Cabin. The New York Evening Post, calls upon the ladies of his district, if they have any old shoes, old boots, old hats, and old stockings, to send them on, and they will be forwarded to the Hero of North Bend. They have raked up from the records of by-gone times, a vote of the General's, to commute the punishment of certain convicts, from imprisonment in the county jails, into service for a limited time in respectable families, and in the plenitude of their sympathy for petty thieves and pilferers, they call it, selling a poor man for debt. An ~~black~~ and besotted member of Congress has even dared in his place to charge the brave old general with cowardice. The friends of Harrison

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cannot venture to meet any where in procession, but they are insulted by the exhibition of "red petticoats" or assaulted even unto death, by bullies espousing the cause of the party in power.

Now it is no part of our purpose to vindicate the fair fame of General Harrison, from aspersions so foul and baseless as these—that has been already committed to the safe keeping of impartial history, and there we design to leave it. The occasion however is a fit one for carrying the war into Africa, and to this end we intend to improve it.

Who then is Martin Van Buren? And how far are the records of his career open to criticism; if not to the severest condemnation? We have asked these questions, in order that we may answer them, and that there may be no cavelling about facts, we shall draw our materials principally from a book entitled, "The Life and political opinions of Martin Van Buren, by William M. Holland"—a work written by a political friend and admirer of the President, who moreover acknowledges large and valuable contributions to its pages, from such men as Benjamin F. Butler, late Att'y. Gen'l. of the U. States, Thomas Hart Benton of the U. States Senate, and others of the like political stamp—a work gotten up during the last presidential canvass, and for the express purpose of aiding the election of its subject, to the station he now occupies—a work in fine, which has passed thro' two editions, and has been recommended to the especial patronage of "the party"—by such prints as the *Globe*—the *Albany Argus*—the *Boston Morning Post* *et id genus omne*. From this book we repeat it, we shall draw the principal portion of our materials, and be its disclosures for good or evil, it is not for Mr. Van Buren or any or his friends at this day, to deny their authenticity.

MARTIN VAN BUREN was born at Kinderhook, on the 5th day of December 1782, and is now therefore in the 58th year of his age. (See ~~Int~~ page 15.)

"After acquiring the rudiments of an English education, he became a student in the academy of his native village.—

He there made considerable progress in the various branches of English Literature, and gained some knowledge of Latin. It may be inferred however that all these acquisitions were not great in amount, as he left the Academy, when but fourteen years of age, to begin the study of his profession." p. 15.

It may be remarked by the way, that the thrusting a youth of the tender age of fourteen into a lawyer's office, to contend with the difficulties of the most abstruse and perplexing of all the branches of knowledge, is, to say the least of it, making a man of him a little too soon.

At the early age of sixteen,

"Mr. Van Buren was an ardent and active politician. His political course will be more fully developed in another place; but it is proper to remark at this point, that it was his constant habit to attend all meetings of the democratic party, to study with attention the political intelligence of the day, and to yield his most zealous aid to the principles he held to be true, both in speaking in public, and employing his ready pen to furnish resolutions and addresses whenever his services were required. As early as 1800, when only in his eighteenth year, and still a student at law, he was deputed by the republicans in his native town to attend a convention of delegates from Columbia and Rensselaer Counties, to nominate a candidate for representative in Congress." p. 29, 30.

We remember to have seen some year or two ago an account of a political meeting, which was alleged to have been made up for the most part of *boys*, and the charge was indignantly repelled as a slander by the friends of the meeting. And such a charge would be deemed opprobrious every where, except perhaps in Kinderhook at the period alluded to. The most disagreeable animal on earth, in our humble judgment, is a pert, pushing, self-sufficient boy of the precise age of sixteen. He is always first at the table, when he grabs every delicacy within his reach. Always foremost in the rush when the dinner bell rings, he is sure of a seat at the first table, though grey-headed men, and venerable matrons are crowded out to wait for the second table. Eternally where he ought not to be, he is in every body's way, speaks with a loud voice, engrosses the conversation, and

"Besides, he always smells of bread and butter."

In the case before us, our attention is called to the example of a boy, mingling in the concerns of men, before the law deemed him competent to have an opinion of his own—intriguing to control the votes of others, before he was entitled to a vote himself—a busy politician at the age of sixteen, when the boys of all well regulated families are at school, acquiring the rudiments of a good education or the graces of good manners.—Speaking upon subjects which he could not possibly understand, and regularly writing nonsense for the newspapers.

The whole life of Mr. Van Buren seems to have been such as might have been expected from so unfortunate a beginning. We shall find him eternally in the field, holding councils, issuing manifestoes, mar shalling his forces—manœuvreing and counter-manœuvreing. Wheeling now to the right, now to the left, and again to the right about. The book of his life, affords us no resting place. The man is never idle. As soon as one contest is over, we shall find him getting up his candidate for the next. At one time he brings out a democrat to run against a democrat—then a democrat against a federalist, and anon a federalist against a democrat. But be his candidate whom he may, he only deems himself bound to adhere to him until the election is over, when if he is beaten, Mr. Van Buren bids him good by, and joins the other side, for according to his creed the party that wins, is always the democratic party.

"He entered upon his twenty-first year in the fall of 1803, and the ensuing spring made his first appearance at the polls as an elector. At that election Morgan Lewis & Aaron Burr were the opposing candidates for the office of governor" & Mr. Van Buren "true to his principles and the spirit of his party gave his vigorous and unhesitating support to Mr. Lewis." p. 80.

But Governor Lewis had no office it seems, to confer upon the youthful aspirant, and mark the consequence!

"In 1807 the antagonist candidates for the office of Governor were Morgan Lewis and Daniel D. Tompkins. The latter as the candidate of the democratic party, and the most

faithful organ of its sentiments received Mr. Van Buren's zealous and decided support." p. 81.

In 1803 Morgan Lewis received his "vigorous and unhesitating support," and in 1807 "his zealous and decided support" was given to Daniel D. Tompkins against Morgan Lewis. A man of plain understanding might be puzzled to comprehend, how democracy should be so different in different men, and in the same men at different times. If we wish to know the reason of the change, the book perhaps will inform us.

"In 1808 Mr. Van Buren was appointed surrogate of Columbia County, and retained the office until 1813." p. 81.

Whether the prior incumbent was turned adrift to provide comfortable quarters for Mr. Van Buren, we are not informed, nor we suppose did he much care. Indeed he would, most probably have considered it a very singular question for any one to ask.

It may be remarked at this place, that the change of Mr. Van Buren from the party of Mr. Lewis to that of Mr. Tompkins—for each had a party and a severe contest took place between them—might be attributed to the caprice and unsettled principles of a very young man, if it were not for the office he received from Governor Tompkins immediately after his installation. And that this judgment may not be deemed uncharitable, we beg the reader to note the various changes and shiftings of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, all of which will be found to be of the same selfish stamp.

His first actual participation in political affairs we are told was in the great contest which preceded the elevation of Mr. Jefferson to the presidency in 1801. He was at that time a student of law in Kinderhook, and espoused the interests of the *democratic* party with the greatest ardor. And as the election of Mr. Jefferson had called forth his earliest exertions, his administration received during its whole course, his unremitting support. So also the *democracy* of Mr. Madison was received by Mr. Van Buren as autho-
dox at his first election in 1808, and he gave Mr.

Madison at that time his vote and support. But when this accomplished statesman and pure patriot, came before his country for re-election in 1812, the only serious opposition he encountered was in N. York, and Mr. Van Buren is found to be an active agent and promoter of that opposition. And who was his candidate against Mr. Madison? It was De Witt Clinton, who though a republican himself, was supported by the Federal party, as its candidate. p. 88.

We pause again to ask the question, what was his cause of quarrel with the pure and upright Madison? In what respect had he swerved from the doctrines and practices of the *true democratic* faith? And especially how could Mr. Van Buren expect to find these doctrines and practices among the supporters of Mr. Clinton, comprising the whole Federal party of the Union? This is the second change we meet with in his history.

But Mr. Madison was elected, and Mr. Clinton the Federal Candidate of Mr. Van Buren was defeated—and then how stands the case?

“At the ensuing session of the legislature, which commenced in January 1813, the political relations previously existing between Mr. Van Buren and Mr. Clinton, were dissolved.” p. 82.

Who doubts it? Catch him adhering to a defeated candidate! He left Mr. Madison and went over to Mr. Clinton, and as soon as Mr. Clinton is defeated he quits him and gets back again in the train of Mr. Madison. This is change No. 3.

“In March 1817, De Witt Clinton was nominated to the office of Governor by a republican convention, in the place of Daniel D. Tompkins, who had been elected Vice President of the United States. Mr. Van Buren acquiesced in this nomination, though it was contrary to his individual wishes and opinions. The distinguished talents of Mr. Clinton, and his recent zealous efforts in promoting the great interests of the state, had so far won the respect and confidence of all parties, that there was comparatively little opposition to his election. During the first year of Mr. Clinton’s administration, but little occurred to disturb this singular coalition of opposite political parties. *But in the difficult task of making his appointments, Governor Clinton gave*

great offence to the republicans, who had yielded him their support. This difficulty widened into an open rupture, and a large majority of the republican party, Mr. Van Buren among the number, withdrew their support from Mr. Clinton's public measures, and made preparations to oppose his re-election. p. p. 119, 120.

The distinguished talents of Mr. Clinton, and his zealous efforts in promoting the great interests of the state were of so meritorious a character as to entitle him in the view of all good men, to the office of Governor. But Mr. Van Buren and his faction wanted something more than distinguished talents and great public usefulness—namely the offices and salaries in the gift of the Governor. It is not pretended that the persons appointed were not well qualified. The character of Governor Clinton forbids such a supposition. Quitting Mr. Clinton in 1813, we find him again rallying under his flag in 1817, and then almost in the same breath, we behold him stirring up a mutiny in the camp, and casting about for a new leader.—This is change No. 4.

"In December 1819 a pamphlet entitled, "considerations in favor of the appointment of Rufus King to the Senate of the United States" was addressed to the republican members of the Legislature of N. York, "by one of their colleagues." It was understood to be from the pen of Mr. Van Buren." p. 129.

Mr. King was a distinguished member of the federal party, and in the pamphlet above alluded to, the writer after detailing at great length the public and political history of Mr. King, declares, *"that if he had not reason to believe Mr. King to be decidedly with the republican party in their opposition to Mr. Clinton he should promptly and zealously oppose his appointment."*

Here is a precious developement. The assumption that it was the republican party who were in opposition to Mr. Clinton was not true in point of fact. A large body of the party were numbered amongst his friends. He was opposed by a faction whose cause of quarrel with him was, that they were not permitted to cut and carve to suit their own appetites. Deser-

ting Mr. Clinton for this cause, they take a candidate for the United States Senate, whose chief recommendation they allege to be, his willingness to take part in their quarrel with Mr. Clinton.

How cold and sordid and mercenary must be the heart of a hackneyed politician! He belongs to that selfish category of the human family, who consider that they were born only to take care of themselves.— He is willing to unite with any party, espouse any cause or support any doctrine, provided only his services are duly remembered, when the appointments are made out. The successful example of one such tactician as Mr. Van Buren, is fitted to bring more discredit upon republican government, than the peculations of whole tribes of defaulting receivers.

He was appointed to the Senate of the United States on the 6th of February 1821. From the Senate he was called to the gubernatorial chair of N. York, and thence to the head of the state department. The sudden death of De Witt Clinton made Mr. Van Buren. Had Clinton lived he would have been General Jackson's Secretary of State and successor in the Presidency, and Mr. Van Buren would now have been in the opposition. How strange these things work!

Mr. Van Buren was a member of the Convention which assembled in Albany in August 1821, to amend the constitution of N. York, and his course in that body is deserving of particular attention. The most objectionable features of the old constitution were those of its provisions which had relation to the right of suffrage; the possession of a free-hold estate of the value of \$250 over and above all debts charged thereon, was necessary to entitle a person to vote for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Senators. Members of the assembly were chosen by persons paying taxes and possessing freeholds of the clear value of \$50, or renting tenements of the value of \$5.

“The committee to whom that subject” (the right of suffrage) “was referred, proposed a residence of six months in the state, and having paid taxes, or worked on the highways,

or done military duty, as the qualification of a voter" p. 163. "Mr. Van Buren was in favor of adding to the latter alternative, the further restriction of being a *householder*" p. 176, and he remarked, "that were the bare naked question of universal suffrage put to the committee, he did not believe there were twenty members who would vote for it. We have" said he, "already reached the verge of universal suffrage. There is but one step beyond, and are gentlemen prepared to take that step? We are cheapening this invaluable right." p. 177.

This is plain English. No man should have a vote, in the opinion of Mr. Van Buren at that time, unless he paid taxes, or did military duty, or worked on the highways, and in addition was a *householder*. The idea of universal suffrage was to him monstrous! He had no notion of giving the right to vote to every body. A Boss might vote, if he were a *householder*, but as to a Journeyman, what right had he to think about politics? Let him mind his work!

These were the "doctrines and principles" of Mr. Van Buren in 1821, openly declared in convention, and deliberately published to the world. He was then forty years of age, and of course knew his own mind. But in process of time he came to be a candidate for the Vice Presidency of the U. States. The Journal of the Convention had gone abroad. Men had seen it fairly set down in a printed book that he was opposed to the right of a poor man, to have a vote. A committee of Mechanics in Rhode Island addressed him a letter on the subject, and requested to be informed whether ~~these~~ were in reality his sentiments, intending no doubt if they were, to give their support to some other candidate for the Vice Presidency. This was bringing the matter to a simple point, and Mr. Van Buren could not stand his ground. In his reply he backs out fairly, and avows himself an advocate of universal suffrage. See pages 181, 182.

This is change No. 5, and like all the rest is a change for office. But we have not done with this right of suffrage question. A proposition was made in convention to restrict the right of voting to *White citizens*, and Mr. Van Buren voted against such a motion, and in favor of giving *Blacks* to vote.

Subsequently, all blacks were allowed to vote, who were possessed of a freehold of the value of \$250, and were exempted from taxation to a corresponding extent: and this provision Mr. Van Buren said, "met his approbation." See pages 182, 183.

According to these doctrines and principles, a negro who holds a little property is a more trust-worthy citizen than a white man who holds none. It is property alone that makes the man.

Connected with this same subject, we may remark, that it was in 1820, that the great question, whether Missouri should be admitted into the Union, with the right to hold slaves, was before Congress. It was a subject which created great excitement and deep feeling throughout the country. In the Senate of N. York Mr. Van Buren voted for a resolution instructing the senators & requesting the representatives for that state,

"To oppose the admission of any territory without making the prohibition of slavery therein an indispensable condition of admission." p. 144.

He was for saying to every new state, about to enter the Union, "You shall not come in,—the door shall be closed against you—unless you will bind yourself before hand, never to permit slavery within your limits."

Now it came to pass, that in 1834, a candidate was to be nominated for the office of President of the U. States, and it was extremely interesting to Mr. Van Buren to have the good will of the South. A committee of Gentlemen of North Carolina addressed him a letter, requesting to be informed what his sentiments were upon the subject of slavery, and in reply he declares "that the subject of slavery is in his judgment exclusively under the control of the state governments." p. 345. And again—

"That the relation of master and slave is a matter exclusively belonging to the people of each state, within its own boundary, and that any attempt by the government or people of any other state or by the general government, to interfere with or disturb it would violate the spirit of compromise which lies at the basis of the federal compact." p. 349.

Here is change No. 6. And again it is a change

not from principle, but a change for office. Are not the people of the United States, now numbering fifteen millions, entitled to something better for their president than a mere polical trimmer? A man holding no opinions, professing no principles, but such as may be turned to the most profitable political account? A man who in his eagerness to be on the strong side, is willing to say to the majority, "Gentlemen, whatever doctrines you desire me to profess, only say the word, and I am ready to profess them, and if at any time gentlemen, you should find it convenient to change your opinions, you have only to let me know, and I will change mine also."

In the contest for the presidency in 1824, there were four candidates in the field, namely, General Jackson, Mr. Adams, Mr. Crawford and Mr. Clay. Each of these gentlemen ran upon his own individual pretensions, except Mr. Crawford, who was brought out under the imposing sanction of a congressional caucus, at Washington, of which Mr. Van Buren was the chief promoter. p. 317. The people failed to elect, and General Jackson entered the House with ninety nine, Mr. Adams with eighty eight, Mr. Crawford with fifty three electoral votes, and Mr. Clay was excluded.—The House gave the appointment to Mr. Adams, against the wishes of Mr. Van Buren, who still supported the nominee of the caucus, who of the three, had received the smallest popular vote.

We pass on however to the canvass occupying the stirring interval between 1824 and 1828, in which General Jackson and Mr. Adams were the only candidates in the field. This memorable contest turned mainly upon the propriety of the choice made by the House of representatives in 1824, and waxed fiercer and hotter as the election approached. Where then was Mr. Van Buren? It is stated in the book before us that "he warmly espoused the cause of General Jackson, soon after the election of Mr. Adams." p. 318. but this statement, we hold ourselves compelled, in deference to the obligations of historical truth, to deny.

It is notorious to all America, that from 1824 to 1827, Mr. Van Buren knew not to which side he belonged. The Albany Regency, then under his dictation, declared themselves "non-committal." He knew that the majority lay, either on his right hand or his left, but on which, he could not exactly make out, and he stood still between them. And thus he stood, and thus stood his whole faction, during three long years of doubtful and wavering apprehension. They were as strangers in a strange land—lost and bewildered like the ten thousand Greeks, and when at length they were given to behold where the majority lay in the distance, they shouted with one voice—"huzza for Jackson!" With characteristic providence, Mr. Van Buren left it to others to bear the danger and burthea of the contest, and then fell into the ranks at the last moment to share the triumph and bear away the lions share of the spoils. Jackson prevailed and Van Buren was appointed secretary of state.

This manœuvre cannot properly be enumerated among his changes, but is the morality of his course one shade lighter, than a direct desertion of one party to join another? For example, suppose two gentlemen resolve during the pendency of an important election, that be the result as it may, they *will* be on the strong side. The one takes sides during the contest, but in the end finds himself with the defeated party, and immediately crosses over to the camp of the victors.—This is bad enough. The other, more wary, keeps his hands clear of the contest, until he perceives which party is going to win, then claims that party as his party, and stands ready for his share of the plunder. Is this any better?

But his course in reference to a general bankrupt law, we consider the most indefensible and the most profligate chapter of his whole life. This subject ought to be fully understood.

In the winter of 1827, a bill to establish a uniform system of bankruptcy was brought up for discussion in the Senate, of which body Mr. Van Buren was then a

member. A proposition was made to include the state banks within the provisions of the bill, and in opposition to the motion he discoursed thus.

“He said it could not be denied, that the clause interfered with the regulations which state governments might have adopted, for the government of their state institutions, *which was an odious exercise of power not granted by the constitution.* The amendment has this extent; it directs the States as to the manner in which they shall exercise their sovereignty in this particular, and points out what penalty shall be inflicted, in case the charters granted by the states shall be violated. . . . All this has hitherto been done by the states.—They have assumed the direction of these matters as a right, which they doubtless have. *And in including this subject of corporations in the bill* now before the senate, it will be taken entirely from the states, and subjected to the power of the bankrupt system. *This never was done, and never attempted in any country on the face of the Globe.*”

The state banks have always been regarded as the peculiar object of state concern, and the reason why the general government failed to crush these corporations, in its recent war against all banks, was, that they were constitutionally beyond its reach. And, if any man could devise a scheme, by which the state banks should be withdrawn from the protection of the states, and placed at the mercy of the federal executive, he would effect a greater revolution in the government, than any that ever transpired in any age or nation, without war and blood-shed. Yet this very change, in the teeth of the patriotic stand taken by him against the same identical measure in 1827, Mr. Van Buren did attempt.

In his special message to Congress of September 4, 1837, he distinctly recommends—

“*The propriety and importance of a uniform law concerning bankruptcies of corporations and other banks.*” “*Through the instrumentality of such a law,*” he remarks, “*a salutary check might doubtless be imposed on the issue of paper money.*”

It is necessary here to remind the reader, that Congress have no power, and never were designed to have any power, over the banking institutions of the states. But that body does possess the authority to provide a uniform system of bankruptcy; and if in the exercise

of this undoubted right, a law were to be passed, including these institutions within its operation, it would indirectly and by a side-wind, give to the federal executive a tremendous and startling power, which from the foundation of the government to the present day, no one has ever dreamed of taking from the states.— It would be in the language of Mr. Van Buren, when the influence of his better genius prevailed, *an odious exercise of power not granted by the constitution.*

We do not stop to enumerate this among the somersets of Mr. Van Buren. It is too grave a subject. But we ask the question, suppose this plan had succeeded, what would have been the consequence?—He would have brought every state bank, and with the banks, all their stockholders, and with the stockholders all their customers, to the footstool of unbridled power. The government would have had nothing more to do, than to signify its wishes to a bank—and in case it proved refractory, the means would never be wanting of pushing it to an act of bankruptcy, when it would be locked up and its business closed with enormous costs and commissions, to some pet of the powers that be. If any president, or cashier or teller of a bank, should dare to hold opinions different from the government standard, he would have to be dismissed or the bank brought to its marrow bones. We tremble for the liberties of this great republic when we contemplate the fearful and mighty power thus grasped at by Mr. Van Buren, and which, but for some lucky chance—some momentary fit of virtue among his own partisans in Congress, might have quietly passed into his hands.

Mr. Van Buren was appointed Secretary of State in March 1829, and very soon thereafter began to lift his eyes to the first office of the Government. The question of the succession had begun already to occupy his thoughts, and he was not idle in preparing the way for himself: but in the path of ambition which lay before him, Mr. Calhoun as it was obvious to all, would be his most formidable competitor, and it was

very natural that he should feel anxious to have a man of such pretensions out of the way. Now it had been ascertained, that Mr. Crawford could state certain facts which if known to General Jackson, would certainly produce a rupture between him and Mr. Calhoun, and it need hardly be told, that whosoever quarreled with General Jackson was certain to have the party and the government press against him. The train being thus laid, the first thing to be done, was to contrive means of having the statement of Mr. Crawford brought to the knowledge of the president. Accordingly, Mr. Forsyth, the bosom friend of Mr. Van Buren and his present secretary of state, made a direct call upon Mr. Crawford for a statement of his facts, and the next thing we hear upon the subject, is a laconic and peremptory note from Gen. Jackson, demanding of Mr. Calhoun to say, whether the information communicated by Mr. Crawford was true or not? And the answer of Mr. Calhoun being an explanation rather than a denial of the charges, an open rupture between him and the president was the immediate consequence. The match had now taken effect. Mr. Calhoun was denounced, pursued and hunted down by the harpies of a prostituted press, and Mr. Van Buren having effected his purpose, felt quite comfortable.

We do not refer to this subject in any feeling of sympathy with Mr. Calhoun. He was tricked, defeated and used up, by superior cunning, but he got no more than he deserved. Our object is to illustrate the political character of Martin Van Buren, and in order that we may do him no injustice in this connexion, we shall dwell for a moment on the point now under review. First of all then, it is a fact that Mr. Van Buren and Mr. Calhoun were members of the same party. They fought side by side at least from 1827, in the fierce contest which resulted in the election of Gen. Jackson to the presidency, and they rejoiced together in the success which crowned their efforts -- They were united in the common object of defeating

Mr. Adams, and again united in sustaining the new administration. Thus linked together by the sympathies of a common cause, of common adversaries, and a common triumph, it is impossible to conceive that either, without some strong personal motive, could meditate intentional harm towards the other. If either had been assailed by their political opponents, it was natural to expect that the other would stand forward to repel the attack. Regarding it in this light, we are compelled, in looking for the motives of the assailant, to assume that it was of a personal and selfish character.

Now if in casting our eye over the prominent leaders of the Jackson party, we shall be able to name the person who notoriously possessed such a motive-- and if moreover it shall appear that he was the only individual in the nation whose motives were adequate to the ~~in~~vestigation of "the conspiracy." We beg to know how that person is to escape from the paternity of the act? Who then was that person?— Stand forth, Martin Van Buren, for thou art the man! The success of the manœuvre redounded directly and immensely to your personal advancement. It made your political fortune. It struck down at a single blow, the only competitor whom you had reason to fear, and left you with a clear field, all to yourself. Your position alone in that affair, independent of all other evidence, is sufficient to condemn you.

But the testimony does not stop here. There is enough behind to establish the guilt of Mr. Van Buren. It is a fact, and the most impressive one in this whole enquiry, that the individual put forward to obtain Mr. Crawford's statement, was the fast political friend of Mr. Van Buren. It is moreover not to be overlooked, that Mr. Forsyth in asking Mr. Crawford for his statement, proceeds to refresh his recollection, by reminding him of a certain conversation which had passed between them, and to indicate the precise kind of information he required, showing distinctly that what he wanted was for a particular purpose. In addition therefore to all the other evidence a-

against Mr. Van Buren, we have the astounding fact, that this information is brought out by his bosom friend and so sought for, that when it comes, it is of the precise substance and in the precise form, deemed most effectual to answer the end in view. Will it be said that Mr. Van Buren was ignorant of the intended movement of his friend in his own behalf? Let it be so said, and who will, or who can believe it?

It is a fact furthermore that Mr. Crawford was another personal and political friend of Mr. Van Buren. Thus we find that all round he is in the hands of his friends. The statement which used up Mr. Calhoun, ~~Mr. Calhoun~~, was demanded by one friend, and furnished by another kind friend, and yet we are expected to believe that he, simple-hearted gentleman! knew nothing of what was passing.

Verily those who make politics a trade, can have no flesh in their hearts. Insensible alike to the claims of friendship or to the feelings of resentment for injuries, they press forward towards the object of their ambition, jostling, striking down, and walking over, all in their way, whether friends or foes.

We have seen a fair example of this in the case before us. Mr. Van Buren, finding his way to the presidency impeded by his ally and co-adjutor, runs him off the course and sacrifices him without one moments compunction. And we have lived to see Mr. Calhoun, still smarting under his wrongs, advancing to the man who defeated his dearest hopes, giving him the right hand of fellowship and enquiring kindly after his health, since they last saw each other. When two such men lay their heads together, then let the world look out for mischief.

Mr. Van Buren is however no sooner out of one intrigue than he plunges into another. He had killed Mr. Calhoun, but it was necessary in the next place to clear his skirts of the state department, and the way he managed this, exhibits a fine specimen of his peculiar workmanship. To shew the necessity of this step will require a word of explanation. Mr. Jeffer-

erson had been secretary of state, and became the president. Mr. Madison was secretary of state when he was elected president. Mr. Monroe was secretary of state when he was elected president. Mr. Adams was secretary of state when he received the appointment of president. Mr. Clay was secretary of state when the war broke out against him and Mr. Adams. The department of state having thus furnished so many presidents, it was urged by the Jackson party, that the head of that department would in time be considered as entitled to the office of chief magistrate as a matter of course. That the people seemed already to have no voice in the matter, and it was deemed high time that the line of succession should be broken up. It could not be supposed therefore that a man of Mr. Van Buren's tact, in attaining the great object of his ambition, would travel towards it on a road which he and his party had rendered odious to the people: and it was now more than ever necessary, that he should at once liberate himself from the trammels of a position, which tended of itself to disparage his hopes.

These facts are sufficiently explanatory of his resignation in April 1831. But why, it may be asked, did he carry with him the whole cabinet? Simply because he did not choose to return alone. Dissension had made its appearance in the cabinet, and that dissension grew out of the conspiracy against Mr. Calhoun. But it was to heal their dissensions that he determined to retire. He placed it upon this ground in his letter to the president, which is so far intelligible, if no further.— If however his single retirement could heal these dissensions, his holding office must have been the cause of them, and to such an inference, it was not to be expected that he should leave himself obnoxious.— Accordingly after he and General Eaton had thrown up their seals, and ten days were permitted to elapse, without any disposition being manifested by Messrs. Branch and Ingham to follow their example, the president himself very politely requested those gentlemen to retire also. Thus in the language of the N. York

Courier, "the magician raised his wand, and a whole cabinet vanished."

This singular affair is further illustrated by the characteristic fact, that in giving up one appointment he took good care to secure himself a retreat into another of equal dignity, for immediately on leaving the department of state he was appointed minister to England.

There is one admission in this life of Mr. Van Buren which we cannot but commend for its candor.—We are told that "his successful career in politics, bears ample testimony to talents of an elevated order, and to a tact in the management of men, and in the control of parties, without a living parallel." p. 116.

The management of men and the control of parties forsooth! The sovereign people it seems are not to be left to the free and spontaneous expression of their own will, but they are to be managed and moulded to the will of Mr. Van Buren. If a plain independent citizen were told at the polls—"Sir, that ballot which you are about to vote is not of your own free choice, but selected and chosen for you, by a cunning magician five hundred miles away. You are not a free agent, but a mere tool in his hands"—he would no doubt repel the admonition with indignation, and scorn. Yet we are told in sober earnest by his biographer, that Mr. Van Buren can do such things, and that it is a great merit in him to be able to do them, with more skill than any other man of modern times.

Mr. Van Buren is infinitely the smallest man that has ever filled the presidential chair, and of this he seems himself to be fully aware, for pretending to no merit of any description as a public man, he bases his title to the support of his party---to the approbation of the American people he has never aspired—upon the distinct ground of contract, or a *quid pro quo*—the terms of which are, "you do for me as I shall do for you. Hence no man ever has, or will receive an appointment from him, but upon the distinct understanding that he is to think with the government on all

questions of public policy, and if he ventures to have an opinion of his own, it shall be good cause of removal. The offices and salaries of the government are assumed to be the property of Mr. Van Buren, to be used by him for the purpose of entrenching himself in power, and rendering himself secure against the remonstrances of public opinion.

It was but the other day that Mr. James Aul, a postmaster in Missouri, was turned out of office for taking the liberty of preferring Gen. Harrison to Mr. Van Buren: and Mr. Ryland, receiver of public moneys at Lexington, Missouri, was also removed for daring to think, that Mr. Aul had faithfully discharged his duty, and ought not to have been dismissed.

But these practices, humiliating as they are, bear no comparison in point of systematized corruption, to the organization of the N. York custom house. The evidence reported to congress by the committee of investigation in the winter of 1839, proves beyond all controversy, that a regular tax is levied upon all salaried officers, at least in the custom house, for the purpose of raising a fund to influence the elections, and to sustain the party in power. It is there fully established, that Mr. Van Buren, unwilling to trust himself to the free and unbought suffrages of his countrymen, has not scrupled to buy up their votes, and for this purpose has used, not his own but the people's money. The testimony taken by the committee, cannot be too extensively circulated—every man in the nation ought to read it.

Arent S. De. Peyster being sworn, said,

“That the weighers were called on to pay \$15 each for the support of the election, and when I declined, Mr. Vanderpoel the deputy surveyor, observed that I ought to consider, whether my \$1500 per annum was not worth paying \$15 for, under the impression that it was the price of my situation, I paid it.”

David S. Lyon being sworn, said,

“I have frequently been called on to contribute to political objects, while I was deputy collector, as an officer of the custom house. The amount was from \$20 to \$100. The tax was *pro ratio*, according to salary.”

Abraham Vanderpoel was sworn, when the following occurrences took place. A question was propounded in writing by Mr. Wise, going to the fact of this tax upon officers, and enquiring particularly as to the witness's knowledge upon that subject.

"The witness took the interrogatory without objection and proceeded to write his answer on the paper attached to the question, and had written the following, to wit: "I have known officers attached to the custom-house to have been called on for"—when Mr. Owens, a member of the committee, interposed and informed the witness that he was not bound to answer any interrogatory relating to his private affairs. And thereupon Mr. Foster, another member of the committee, objected to propounding the interrogatory. The witness here commenced to tear off what he had written before objection was made to the interrogatory. Mr. Wise prevented him from doing so, by forbidding the act. Mr. Foster insisted that the witness had a right to tear off what he had written, and that it was not his answer until it was complete and handed in; and he asked the witness whether it was his answer, and he replied "it was not." And the committee having decided that the interrogatory should be propounded, the said question was again handed to the witness and he returned the following—"I decline to answer the question." The witness was then permitted to retire."

John Becker, being sworn, said

"All the collections I ever made for the democratic republican party, were strictly confidential; I therefore respectfully decline answering the question."

Here we have a truly edifying spectacle. Corruption reduced to a regular system, and locked up from legal scrutiny by pledges of secrecy, and the bonds of a villainous confidence, and members of congress deputed to eviscerate those foul enormities, are found interposing to screen the culprits by smothering the truth.--- These things not only happen under the approving eye of Mr. Van Buren, but are the legitimate fruits of his own life and education as a politician, and yet we are to believe that he is a democrat and his faction the only true friends the people have!





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